

MINUTES DRAFT- as of 2/3/06
Governor's State Trails Council Meeting
Monday, January 30, 2006
GEF 2 Building
101 S. Webster Street, Madison, WI 53707
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

State Trails Council Members Present: Mike McFadzen (via telephone), Dave Phillips, Ken Carpenter, Tom Huber, Alison Dwyer, Tom Thornton (via telephone)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present: Bill Morrissey, Peter Biermeier, Laurie Osterndorf, Brigit Brown, Larry Freidig, Joseph Warren

Others present: Rob McConnell (Sitting in for Randy Harden), John Schnorr (WOHVA), Ken Linzmeyer (WOHVA), Jim Goeldner (WOHVA), Luana Schneider (W4WDA)

Agenda review/repair and Approval of October meeting minutes

- McFadzen wanted to know if the Office of Energy (OOE) website was tracking the ATC transmission lines project. McFadzen has received many calls with concerns that the transmission lines will follow trail corridors. McFadzen would like to have Dave Siebert, Director of OOE, as well as a Public Service Commission (PSC) member attend the STC meeting on May 2, 2006. Brown will work to get these people to the meeting.
- McFadzen asked about the ATC resolution that was passed on October 10, 2005. The ATC resolution is on the DNR's STC website. McFadzen would like to distribute the resolution further.
- Carpenter mentioned that Wednesday, February 1, 2006 is Agriculture Day with the Wisconsin Legislature and that he will be participating. Brown stated that the DNR has a chart that lists the trails within a legislature members' district. McFadzen asked to receive a copy of this chart.
- Approval of minutes Huber, Phillips moved. Approved.

Chair Report

- McFadzen reviewed the Sheboygan County \$25 million non-motorized grant to increase walking and biking transportation in the county. Sheboygan County is joining Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, Columbia, Missouri, and Marin County, California as one of the four test areas for this program.
- Some of the goals concerning the grant are to see if the grant can reach businesses and schools, and see if walking and biking can carry the transportation load of a community. The work of Representative Tom Petri, 6th District of Wisconsin, was crucial for getting the grant for Sheboygan County. Huber explained that there will be data collection to see what shifts in transportation will occur and what will be the effects of those shifts, such as the change in the amount of pollution and traffic congestion.

- Huber noted that Sheboygan County has the opportunity to become a national focal-point for non-motorized transportation. These four test areas will help to determine if people can keep walking and biking, reduce the amount of transportation trips by automobile, and decrease pollution. If these factors can be proven, more grants will likely be authorized in 2009, which could include grants to 50 to 100 additional communities.
- Huber noted that the funds can be spent in a variety of ways. The funds could be spent to create sidewalks, trails, other trail development projects, and the funds could also be used in the county communities for education. Brown mentioned she would like to see information on how Sheboygan County uses the grant, as it could change the face of transportation, as future trail money may come through earmark bills and grants rather than transportation enhancements.
- McFadzen will send an email to Council Members for information on the March meeting for the Sheboygan County non-motorized grant. There will be a summit in late April or early May with the top bike/pedestrian people in the Midwest and Sheboygan County to explain what the grant entails, and all STC members are invited to attend the summit.
- McFadzen asked McConnell to review the proposal by Senator Breske regarding the connectivity of ATV trails. The problem of trail connectivity occurs when one trail segment ends and there is confusion on how to get to the next segment. Senator Breske's work, which began with a connection issue on the Wolf River Fishery Area, and the Wolf River State Trail, aims to establish clear and accurate descriptions and locations of trail connectors, and to eliminate road blocks.
- The proposal was initially supposed to involve only ATVs and Off-Highway Vehicles. Brown said it was suggested by Randy Harden that the connector issue should have a broader scope, to which Breske agreed. McFadzen liked the idea of including all trail user groups in the proposal, as all trail users have to deal with the issue of trail connectivity.
- Brown noted that Senator Breske's proposal may be similar to what the DNR is working on with the upcoming Trails Plan. Brown would like to see tourism added into the proposal as well. McFadzen stated that this proposal could be a watershed for trails, and sounds as if it is likely to occur.
- McFadzen commented on the issue of logging along trails. The DNR's current Crossing and Linear Use Policy allows linear use of State Trail Corridors for logging by units of government, public institutions, and private landowners enrolled in Managed Forest Law. There are specific guidelines and policies for these. Biermeier said he will be working with the Lands Division Bureau Director and the Division of Forestry to have a policy draft by the May 2, STC meeting.
- McFadzen commented that he had noticed firsthand selective logging along trails, and had noticed that farther away from the same trails, increased logging had occurred. This made more sense for the preservation of trails and trail aesthetics, as clear-cutting forests can promote too much damage.

DNR Report

Motorized Recreational Use Area

- Bill Morrissey gave a summary of the proposed State Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area. Currently the Wisconsin State Park System (WSPS) allows motorized recreation on seven State Trails and at the Richard Bong State Recreation Area. The DNR has received requests for additional motorized recreation opportunities throughout Wisconsin. The motorized state recreation area paper proposal is in draft form. First the Land Leadership Team will meet and make a number of revisions. The next step is to take the paper to the Department Leadership Team. The DNR wants to form a partnership with individuals and groups that have an interest in the proposal, and then proceed from there. Osterndorf added that the paper would then have to go to the Natural Resources Board because they approve all land acquisitions, and noted that along the route of the paper, the public will have a chance to comment. Morrissey explained that the DNR was looking at other states to see the sizes of their motorized areas. The average size of other state motorized recreation areas is around 5000 acres, with New Hampshire having one area that is about 7500 acres. The Wisconsin DNR would be looking at the minimum size of the motorized recreation area to be 2000 acres. McFadzen asked if snowmobiles would be permitted in this area for winter use. Morrissey said that it could be a possibility and added that there are also examples that allow a portion of the area for cross-country skiers, mountain bikes, and other recreational uses.
- Osterndorf added that the public would have the opportunity to give their recommendations on the size of the recreation area, facilities, staffing, and trails. The master planning process includes public input. The specifications of the recreation area will be determined by land acquisitions and master planning.
- Morrissey reviewed the DNR Strategic Plan. The Plan is broken into nine areas of the WSPS. Teams from each of the nine managed areas are meeting on February 13, 2006 to go over the Strategic Plan draft. After the teams meet the plan will go to the public. The Friends groups will have two or three informal policy committee meetings and will offer the invitation to STC members. These meetings will most likely be in March. Morrissey encouraged STC members to attend the meetings and give their input.
- Morrissey reviewed the proposed DNR hunting policy to recognize the role of resource management. The main idea of the policy is that hunting in WSPS properties is done for resource management. Biermeier added that the DNR would look at resource management with deer hunting to amend park master plans. The proposal to allow hunting on four state parks was reduced to two state parks, and this proposal will go to the Natural Resources Board in February. Osterndorf added that the Department's green sheets make recommendations to the NRB in part based on public hearings and input. McFadzen and Phillips would like a copy of the green sheets. Biermeier said that the green sheets are not available for distribution yet, but will send the green sheets to McFadzen and Phillips as soon as they are available.
- Morrissey commented that at this point the WSPS will do what they can to keep transmission lines from running along trails.

- Brown introduced Joseph Warren who will be working with her in the Trails Program.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

- Biermeier reviewed the schedule for SCORP. The DNR will have the draft written by April 13, 2006, and from there, the draft will go to the External Review Panel on May 15, 2006. There will be a six-week public draft period. After the public draft period, the draft will be revised and be presented to the Natural Resources Board in October. The draft will need to be signed by the governor to be a plan, and the National Park Service will get a signed, printed copy in November.
- Biermeier explained some of what will be included in SCORP. There will be a chapter on the demand for Wisconsin recreation areas from out of state visitors, a chapter on conflict occurring between differing outdoor recreation uses, a chapter on regional needs, a chapter on wetland protection, a chapter on water trails as a major growth of outdoor recreation in Wisconsin, a chapter on trends and projections, and a chapter on recommendations.
- Biermeier said that Jeff Prey, DNR Programming and Planning Analyst, will make a major presentation on SCORP at the May 2, 2006 STC meeting, as SCORP deals with significant trail issues.

Officer Elections

- Huber presented a slate of officers for 2006: Mike McFadzen, chair, Dave Phillips, vice chair, and Ken Carpenter, secretary.
- McFadzen was willing to be the chair for 2006, but stated that after this year he would like to remain on the council, but due to time constraints would like to step down as chair and take on a lesser role for 2007.
- Thornton motioned to accept the nominations, seconded by Huber. Passed unanimously.

DNR Report Continued

- Brown spoke on the news she received earlier that morning that \$2 billion was being cut nationally from the Federal Surface Transportation budget. The budget passed last August, is called SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users). The SAFETEA – LU budget will have money taken out for each state, and Brown is unsure of how it will affect the earmarks. Brown stated that she was told the cuts would be determined by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT), and that the DOT had already taken the money out of transportation enhancements. Huber will investigate the matter further and get back to all council members.
- Brown reviewed the proposal for a new Trail Plan. The Trail Plan will provide a blueprint and structure for the direction of the State Trails System, will address specific trails goals and strategies addressed in the Wisconsin State Park System Strategic Plan (currently underway), will have an additional end result of accurate GIS information for the public, will address issues of conflicts with trail use, and will recommend trail uses on segments of rail to trail corridors based on data (SCORP) and other factors such as public input. This is a major project for the direction of the State Trails System. There will be multiple public meetings throughout the state during the creation of the document to give the public the opportunity to contribute input, questions, and concerns regarding the Trails Plan. The Trail Plan is expected to go before the Natural Resources Board around the middle of 2007.

Land Legacy Report

- McFadzen asked about the release of the Land Legacy Report and how it related to trails. The Land Legacy Report was released Thursday, January 26. The report identifies properties that are critical for Wisconsin's recreation and conservation needs. The report does not list the best trails in Wisconsin, but identifies the best uses of a given property for future planning. The 250-page, coffee-table quality report is available on the DNR website. Brown will send a link to Council Members so they are able to get a hard copy.

Other Business

- Thornton reviewed the recent ordinances passed in Bayfield County for recreational motorized vehicles. The county passed a speed limit of 55 m.p.h. and 86 decibels for snowmobiles at night and a speed limit of 40 m.p.h. and 96 decibels for ATVs. Before the ordinances were in place there were no restrictions on speed or decibel noise, but it was possible to give tickets to snowmobiles for going too fast for conditions. McConnell explained there is confusion with the different tests for snowmobiles and ATVs, but decibel restrictions work out to be the same audible noise.
- The ordinances were partly put in place due to noise complaints from neighboring land owners to motorized trails in Bayfield County. The ordinances will hope to cut down on the problem of illegal racing on lakes at night, and cut down on the amount of snowmobile fatalities in the state. Last year there were 27 snowmobile fatalities in Wisconsin, and to date this year, 9 fatalities have been reported. The Department of Tourism is working on this issue and has put up billboards to help get the word out.
- McFadzen complimented Thornton for taking the initiative in helping to create the ordinances. Thornton stated that seven counties had already requested a copy of the ordinances. Thornton would like to see similar ordinances go statewide and explained that the ordinances were a hard sell, but the tourism committee and members of the alliance were for the ordinances and there was not one descending vote.
- McFadzen will appoint a STC advisor to the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest ATV Stakeholder Group. Duties would include being able to sight a trail. Anyone interested is to contact McFadzen.
- McFadzen mentioned that the STC meeting on May 2, 2006 would be a tremendous opportunity to network with the Governor and legislators. McFadzen asked for suggestions on key members of the state legislature and other contacts that should be invited to the STC meeting.
- McFadzen will work with Brown and Warren to have a lunch presentation similar to last year for legislators, and asked that the Natural Resources Committee attend the noon presentation. Brown asked for all Council Members to recommend at least one person to invite. McConnell suggested that Senator Breske give an update of the proposal he is working on. Morrissey would like the State Tourism Chair invited as well.
- McFadzen asked John Schnorr to call him any time to discuss issues such as those that had arisen after the last STC meeting.

Public comment

- Luana Schneider commented that the Wisconsin 4-Wheel Drive Association was looking to work with the Wisconsin DNR on the OHV Park/Intensive Use Areas initiative, but did not want to lose access to the already established motorized trails in Wisconsin, and wanted such trails kept open on a regular basis. STC members generally agreed that the already established trails for Off-Highway Vehicles would remain open.
- Motion to adjourn by Huber. Seconded by Phillips. Meeting adjourned.